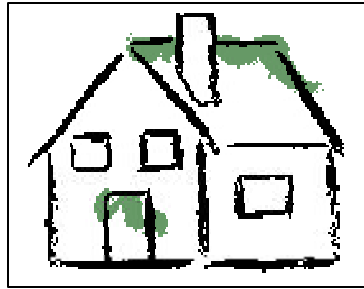


Children Home Alone



With both parents working, there are more and more children coming home from school and being alone with free time on their hands. These kids have been nicknamed “Latch-key” because they have to carry a house key to let themselves in after school. Depending on what routine the child has grown up with, coming home to an empty house can be a big adjustment (actually for both the child and the parents).

Your child will really appreciate a phone call from you as the parent when they get home. Children want to believe that someone cares about them and cares enough to listen. By calling everyday at the same time, you can feel secure that your child is home and safe. You will also be giving your child a sense of responsibility, as they will come to expect your call everyday.

Secondly, you will want to make sure that your child’s house key is kept in a safe spot. Getting in the habit of wearing the key around the child’s neck under their clothing is a good idea. It is also a good idea to leave a spare key with the neighbor so that your child will never be left stranded. If you know and trust your neighbors, you may want to have your children leave their key with the neighbor in the morning and pick it up on their way home from school (if this is an option). Again, it forces the children to be accountable to someone and they know that someone is there if they need them.

Teach your children safe practices for when they are home alone. Safe practices include: answering the door to strangers, answering phone calls, responding to emergencies, and following the rules of the house when there are no adults present.

While your child is home, encourage them to enjoy their time spent alone. Encourage your child to focus on hobbies or projects that interest them, or things that give them pleasure and tap into their resourcefulness. Children that are mature enough to be at home alone are also capable of helping with age appropriate household duties. This can help you out and benefit the child by freeing up your time when you are home so that you can spend more time together in the evenings.